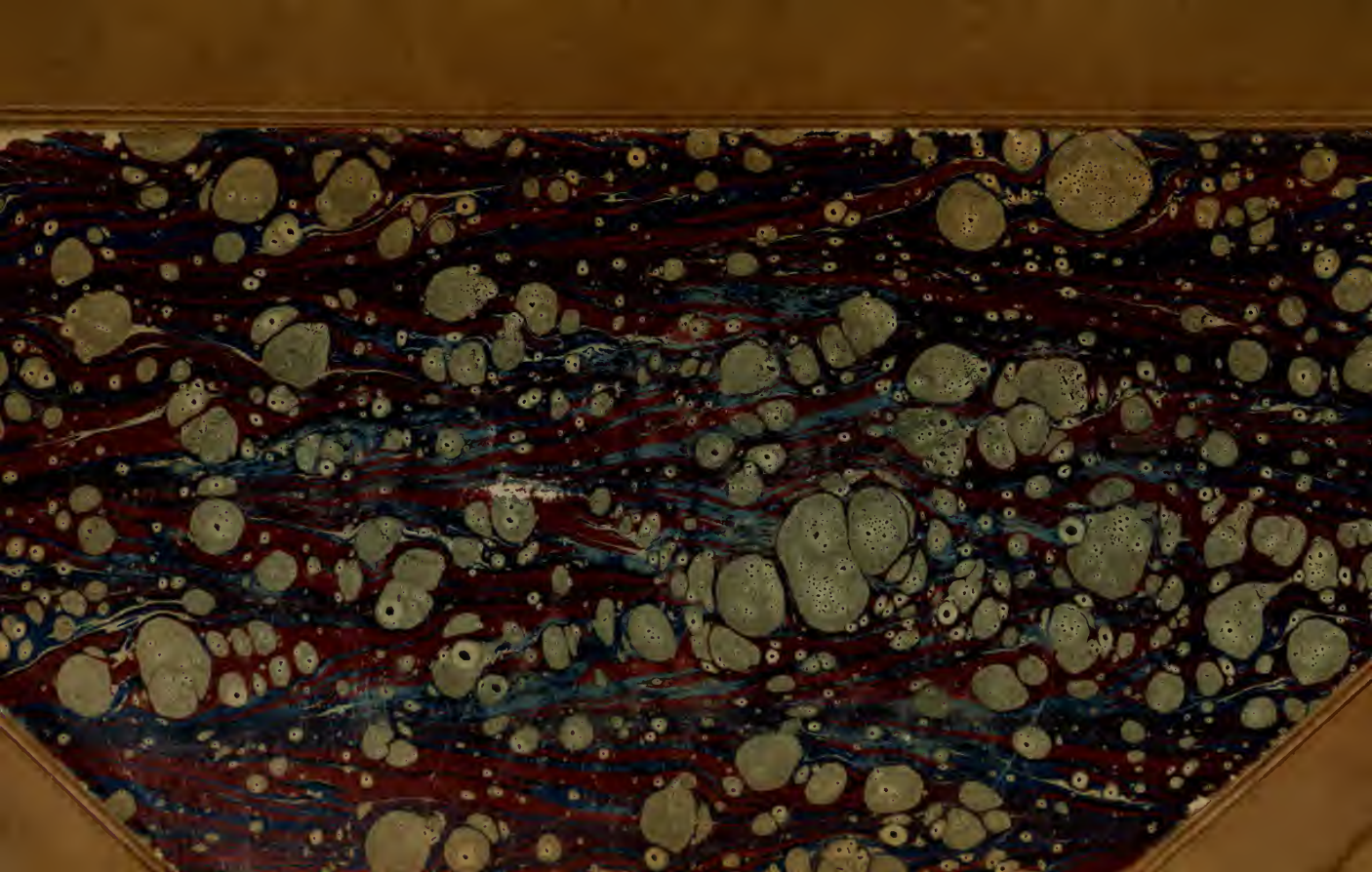

OCCASIONAL PAPER

Cambridge Mission to Delhi,

IN CONNEXION WITH THE S.P.G.

MISSIONARY WORK IN INDIA

BY THE

REV. G. A. LEFROY, M.A.,

OF TRINITY COLLEGE AND THE CAMBRIDGE MISSION.

CAMBRIDGE:
PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.
1887

CAMBRIDGE MISSION, DELHI,
April 29, 1887.

Dear Dr Westcott,

As I was leaving your house at Westminster in August last year you asked me to throw into the form of an occasional paper the substance of a sermon I preached in the Abbey on Missionary work in India. This letter is to be an attempt to comply with your request. The object I set before myself in that sermon was to enable an English congregation to realise rather more clearly than they usually do the conditions of our life and work out here, having regard more particularly to the moral tone and atmosphere of the country as a whole. And with this aim I introduced as far as possible specific facts and incidents in detail. It was not without some effort that I did so, but I am very deeply convinced that only by such and not by any generalities—however well generalised and true—can you at home gain any true conception of the state of things out here in this respect. For generalities, whatever or however much they may mean to any one who is personally acquainted with the country, mean much less, or at any rate something wholly different, to one who has no such personal acquaintance and who therefore necessarily interprets them by the general tone and standard of ideas prevailing at home, with which alone he is familiar. And for two reasons in particular I long very much that you all at home, who are so deeply interested—not to say yourselves engaged in—our work, should have some true conception of the moral tone of this country. In the first place without it you cannot possibly appreciate the difficulties with which we have to contend: for every day that one works in the country the conviction comes home to one, I think, with greater and greater force that, behind all apparent temporary or local causes of difficulty and seeming failure, real and most weighty though many of these undoubtedly are, there lies as the most serious difficulty of all that we encounter in Mission work an intensely low moral tone, which has permeated and now broods over the whole country, checking really healthy

progress in well nigh every direction, and above all blunting the power of conscience and the consciousness of sin to a degree of which you can scarcely conceive, but which gives a terrible fulness of meaning for us to the words of our Lord, "They that are whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And on the other hand looking away from ourselves one may I think believe that such a view if truly gained would have no small value for many at home, in its bearing on their own work. For one of the sorest difficulties surely we have to contend with is the feeling of doubt which at times steals over one as to how far, in spite of all the efforts being made, Christianity is really making headway and gaining ground in the struggle with unbelief and sin. There have been moments I am sure for all of us when it has seemed as though merely to hold its ground taxed to the uttermost the power of the Church of Christ, and we have scarcely realised the possibility of strong onward movement and great victories of the faith. At such times if we could clearly realise that however great the shortcomings, however terrible the failings, there yet had been secured by the power of the Cross of Christ operating so long on our land a definite advance to a standpoint of public morality and public conscience, which really differentiate the conditions of our home life to an almost inconceivable degree from the conditions of life in countries where that power has not yet made itself felt, this would surely give us the very spring of encouragement and hope, which we need to enable us more clearly to realise the victory by which our Faith *has* overcome the world, and to brace ourselves for larger, more self-sacrificing and earnest efforts to make that victory our own. And the conviction that this is in the most intensely true sense really the case has been borne in on me with ever deepening intensity during the seven years I have spent here in Delhi, and it is the conviction I would fain communicate to you. In its fullest force it cannot probably be gained except by actual personal experience of life under both conditions. It has often been said that we do not really appreciate the blessings we enjoy till we lose them, and I have no doubt that in the present instance just because the principle of faith in all the relations of man to man, whether political, commercial, social or family, has so deeply permeated our English life, we are too often tempted to overlook its power and treat the blessings which flow from its operation as matters of course. It

The Rare Book & Manuscript Library UIUC

requires however no very large experience of life in India to convince one how far this is from being the case. For we stand here face to face with a society where the principle sometimes so loudly asserted among ourselves of leaving nothing to faith, of believing only that for which we have the evidence of our own senses is—not indeed absolutely adhered to, for this would mean I conceive the entire dissolution of society, but still carried out with very considerable consistency, and where the exercise of faith though not wholly wanting is yet proportionately circumscribed. And for the purpose of a comparison such as that I wish to institute few places could be better suited than Delhi just because it has been as yet singularly little affected by western influence and Christian thought. For many centuries the capital of Hindoo and Mahommedan empires and the seat of a high oriental civilisation, the old traditions linger on with unusual tenacity and show the greatest reluctance to yield before the tide of change and western influence which is rising with such force over most parts of this vast Peninsula. It is obvious that this very stagnation and dogged resistance to change—so regretable in many ways—makes it a singularly good field for comparison and for ascertaining the true and legitimate effect of the principles which have for long been operative here and have been as yet comparatively undisturbed in their action by alien influences. What then is the characteristic of Indian life which strikes one most forcibly? In the answer to this there can be but little doubt. Few I suppose with any wide experience of Indian life would hesitate to name as the defect which strikes one most painfully, which permeates most widely through and most fatally corrupts their life, the want of faith—of faith in man as man—the want of trust whether of trustfulness or trustworthiness—the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust on the one hand with their invariable correlations of deceit, falsehood and untrustworthiness on the other, which so broods over the land. This it is which, amongst much that is good and worthy of our own imitation in Indian character, is yet so fatally paramount and constitutes the most formidable obstacle in the way of all attempts, whether of the government or of the missionary, to raise them to a higher life.

Take their political life. It is generally admitted that, as well for the strength and vigour of our own rule as for the sake of the natives themselves, it is highly desirable that they should be admitted to a more considerable share than they have hitherto enjoyed, both in the

counsels and executive of our Indian Empire. Those of you who at all follow the course of Indian affairs will know how great have been the efforts recently made to bring about this desirable change, while it is believed to be one of the principal objects of the Royal Commission at present sitting out here to secure still further advance in this direction. But what is it which is the chiefest difficulty? Without the smallest doubt the general untrustworthiness and want of uprightness and strength of character in the nation at large. It is hard to find even a few men, even in the highest classes, who can be said to be in any really wide sense worthy of faith, of reliance and trust, who can be depended upon—in the same way as you can, broadly speaking, depend upon Englishmen—to adhere to truth and justice, where they come it may be in conflict with their race or caste prejudices. An instance which happened not very long ago in Delhi will bring home to you, better than many generalities, the kind of tone I refer to. A well-known native judge addressing his court begged them not to suppose that he was there to administer justice, or respect truth. "I have been put here" he said "by the English authorities in this place, and what I mean to do is to keep them content[1] and to give such decisions as may be most agreeable to them." One can imagine the effect such an address—if one could conceive its being made—would have on an English court, but—and this surely speaks almost more eloquently than the words of the individual as to the tone of the country—they neither shocked nor startled the court to which they were addressed, nor called forth any protest, but were accepted as the statement of the most natural and intelligible principle possible. How, I ask, can political or national life live—not to say flourish—in such an atmosphere? Take another instance: an Englishman high in the Civil Service told me that a

[1] The incident was told me by a leading member of the bar here and its accuracy may be entirely relied on. Nor, I venture to say, would there be any inclination to doubt it amongst those most conversant with the country. At any rate if such a one were to question its accuracy I have not a moment's hesitation in saying that he would do so not on the ground that it was in itself inherently impossible, contradictory to what we know of the tone of native society and opposed to facts, but simply on the ground that, from prudential reasons and from the fear that it might reach the ears of those very English authorities, it is improbable that a man would make such an outrageous remark. That this would be the line taken by any Anglo-Indian who wished to criticise the story there cannot be a doubt, and yet this surely bears less forcible witness than the story itself to what I want to illustrate.

short time ago a native gentleman was speaking to him about the strength of English rule out here, and he said, "The secret of it is the extraordinary way you hang together and back each other up. In the old days the Delhi Emperor scarcely ever sent a Governor into one of his more distant provinces—Behar, Bengal or the like—without the feeling that in all likelihood the man would throw off his allegiance, and try to establish an independent rule. And in scores of cases the fear was justified by the result, and few things contributed more to the instability and dissolution of the Empire than this; but with you it never seems even to suggest itself to the Viceroy or Lieut.-Governor that they might do this." So essentially is it true that this sort of thing does not even suggest itself to us, that one can scarcely repress a smile at the suggestion when it does reach us from another: but to the speaker what seemed extraordinary was, not that such things *should* occur, but that they should *not* occur. And after making fullest allowance for the changed conditions—the centralisation of power, the improved communications etc., which go so far, I suppose, to make this sort of thing impossible now—one would surely not be right in overlooking that difference in the moral conditions, which was what had taken most hold on the mind of the speaker in this instance, and seemed to him to lie at the root of the matter. Not least among the reasons which would make it impossible for our Viceroy or Lieut.-Governor to distinguish themselves now in the way suggested, would be the absolute refusal of the whole body of English Executive in the province to cooperate with them in any way in such a step, or to do anything but oppose them to the utmost of their power. But this was just what was lacking under the Mahomedan rule; there was no coherency because no loyalty or allegiance or faith. And if all this is changed now, the change is due not less surely to moral than to physical causes or administrative measures. Again, an English judge told me that in a case which recently came on before him the nephew of a very respectable native gentleman appeared as a witness, and gave on oath evidence that turned out to be the most palpable and bare-faced perjury. Meeting the uncle shortly afterwards, my friend expressed to him his sorrow at having found his nephew in such a position. The uncle however saw nothing to be ashamed of in the matter. He pointed out that it was a party dispute between Hindus and Mahomedans, that his co-religionist had demanded this service of the nephew, and it would have been impossible for him to refuse

to render it. The gentleman added, that under the same circumstances he would have had no hesitation in pursuing a similar line of conduct. After this instance from what may be called high life it will scarcely perhaps be worth quoting a somewhat similar case which happened to a friend of mine from a lower social stratum. It is however, I believe, a type of a case of very frequent occurrence, so I will give it. A case in which he was concerned was coming on in court. Shortly before it came on his cook came to him and asked whether he could be of any service, i.e. give evidence on any point in the matter. My friend replied with some astonishment, "No! what do you know about it? You were not present at all when the affair happened." "True, oh gracious defender of the poor," was the reply, with clasped hands and in a tone of deepest humility and devotion, "but do I not eat my master's bread and salt and shall I be so basely ungrateful as to hesitate to render him any service he may direct?[1]"

Another little point I may mention which will perhaps appeal to you rather forcibly. It is a by no means uncommon belief among our poorest Christians here in Delhi (I refer to those drawn from the Chumár caste, of whose history you already know something) that large sums of money are sent by the charitably disposed faithful in England, and intended as alms for the support of the poor Christians

[1] I cannot refrain from mentioning a point small in itself but which recently came home to my own mind with tremendous force. As you know I took, after 6½ years' work here, a three months' run home last year. Nothing I think struck me as more remarkable, or bore clearer witness to the change to another moral atmosphere, than the ordinary attitude taken towards servants, the quiet natural way in which questions were asked them, the matter of course and quiet acceptance of their answers. I do not refer now to any questions of special importance or matters in which there might be supposed to be some temptation to be untrue, but just to the ordinary comings and goings and petty details of the home life in which it never seems to occur to one to doubt the truth of the reply. And yet it is just in these little points that the difference between the two countries comes so vividly out: for, out here, I am not I hope being over hard on the run of Hindoo and Mahomedan servants when I say that it is the exception when you get a man whose word—even in the most petty and absolutely indifferent matter, and where you can conceive no possible reason why he should tell you anything but the truth—can be wholly relied upon. They scarcely seem capable of discriminating very strictly between truth and falsehood. I cannot convey to you at all a sense of the impression this experience made on me, or the kind of revelation it was to me of the difference in the moral tone of the two countries.

out here, but arrested in transit and pocketed by the Missionaries. These grow fat on the proceeds of their peculation, only passing on a sufficient dole to the originally-intended recipients to prevent an actual outcry and exposure in the matter. In the same way, views are held by outsiders—Hindus and Mahomedans, even of a far higher class—about our work, which have got a very ludicrous side but which perhaps may be thought to form a no inconsiderable part of the answer to the question, why our work does not seem to get on more rapidly among them and bear more fruit. A very humorous instance of this came before us quite recently. Writing some three years ago of Wright's attainments in the Urdu language I remarked that they were still in the stage which might be described as elementary. Things however have greatly changed since then, and during the last few months especially the strides of progress have been most rapid. Encouraged by this his Munshi (teacher in the language) a short time ago thought that the time had come to play a master stroke, and by still further stimulating the zeal of his pupil secure results which could not but reflect with credit on the master. He therefore reminded him one day in strict privacy, that Mr Allnutt's furlough was strictly coming on; and that when he went the college principalship would be vacant. He further added that he had heard Mr Lefroy, though next in the running, was not very keen about it; and then urged Wright to brace up all his energies and see if he could not, by unremitting industry during the next few months, carry it off over my head. The idea of Wright making the running in the dark, with the intention of coming with a rush at the end and beating me on the post, was one that tickled us immensely. The belief is widespread that the College work especially carries with it high emoluments; and that, whether employed in that department or elsewhere, we are rapidly amassing large sums of money is a fact that no sane man would question for an instant.

I cannot do better I think than quote in conclusion a paragraph bearing on this subject which recently appeared in our Indian Times, the "Pioneer." That paper—whatever its faults may be—will certainly not be suspected of looking at things from a too exclusively Christian stand-point, or being narrowed in its judgement of the natives by any very strict religious views, though I am indeed thankful to recognise the change that has most noticeably come over its tone since the editorship changed hands not very long

ago. The position he takes is exactly the one I want to occupy, viz.—not that bribery, corruption, disloyalty and the like are unknown in England, or are confined to India—but most emphatically that the standard of public morality as a whole on such points is in the two countries absolutely and infinitely different.

"Bribery is peculiar to no creed or country; and England, who has seen one of her greatest geniuses ending his venal life in dishonoured old age, has had no immunity in the past. But the latest case of conspicuous bribery brought to light in India displays features that mark the corruption of the East as something altogether different—in class as in degree—from the judicial abuses of the West. Mahomed Yusuf Saib, late temporary Deputy Collector and Magistrate of Coconada, has been convicted of taking bribes; and the evidence showed, first, that he took bribes from both prosecutor and defendant in the same case; secondly, that prosecutor, defendant, and a third party were all present when the larger bribe was given; and thirdly, that the lawyers on both sides were told that the bribe was going to be given, and were duly informed when it had been given. There is something generous about broadly planned venality like this, which defies secrecy altogether. It would only require the publication by the parties in the Governmental Gazette of each such transaction satisfactorily completed to make the system perfect and irreproachable."

Let me turn for a moment to their commercial life. What is it which so contracts the limits of native enterprise, and so hinders the development of those resources which the country undoubtedly possesses, but the development of which is confined at present almost wholly to English capital and English energy? There are, I believe, two chief causes. On the one hand, while the actual wealth of the country has, it can scarcely be doubted, considerably increased, the sense of public credit—the kind of trust, which is an absolute condition of all commercial enterprise and all banking operations—is almost wholly lacking; and the money is accordingly hoarded away in the earth, and only borne witness to by the profuse masses of gold and silver jewellery which load their women on all great occasions. A recent writer in India estimates the amount of bullion, which during the last forty years has entered the country and been disposed of in the above manner, leaving scarcely a trace of itself in the quarters where one would be certain to find it in

England, at about 350 millions sterling[1]. And similar in kind is the other chief cause which so limits the development of the trade and resources of the country. So deeply does the spirit of distrust pervade the commercial classes that all enterprise involving the cooperation of others is shrunk from, and even that partnership in business so universal, so essential among ourselves, is with rare exceptions unknown to them, and in fact scarcely possible. A man can trust only himself. He would never believe that his partner if really left to himself would act honestly, or give him his true share of the profits; consequently almost every business is owned by one man, or at most by two or more brothers. How this fetters the development of trade, how impossible it makes undertakings on any large scale, you can readily imagine.

I will only allude most shortly to the outcome in the sphere of social and family life of this principle I have been trying to trace, this want of mutual trust and faith. You know I am sure the feature of social life out here which, to one accustomed to English life, strikes one at once most forcibly and most painfully. I refer of course to the seclusion of women, their entire absence from all society of men. And to what is this due, to what does it testify? to what but an utter want of faith?—of faith in the purity of their women, of faith in the honour of their men—and to the necessary effect which such an utter want of faith must inevitably have on the relation of the sexes and on the whole constitution of society. And it is not social life only in its best and most elevating aspect which is thus destroyed, but family life as well. I will not disgust you with the rules which a morality, which is above all else ignoble and wanting in trust, has introduced even into the innermost relations of the family, so that an elder brother may not so much as speak to his younger brother's wife and the like: but I leave it to you to say how much of the purity and beauty and deep trust and love of our own English homes could have originated in, or could long survive, such an atmosphere[2]. I

[1] *India Revisited*, by G. Smith, M.P., p. 19, publ. Wm. Isbister, 1886. This little pamphlet (1*s*. I think) would be worth reading by anyone who wants to see the programme of the more advanced reform party in India stated with quietness and moderation. It was originally published in an article in the *Contemporary Review*.

[2] I may refer shortly—the subject does not admit of treatment at much length—to the fearfully low moral tone which in other ways also broods over the country. That the most awful coarseness, immorality and impurity are

have nothing I think to add. An almost entire absence of faith as a principle of life—a low degraded moral tone—a blunted consciousness of sin which leaves the individual scarcely capable of shame or honest repentance in any way, except a very intense desire to escape punishment—these are some of the prominent conditions of the life amidst which our lot has been thrown: and these, when they have sunk through long centuries into the very blood of the people and sapped their life, will make us scarcely wonder if results of missionary labour do not make themselves seen as immediately or as abundantly as we might wish. Three words in conclusion and I have done.

far from unknown to English life one is compelled too sadly to admit: but even here, as in the case of bribery and corruption, I do claim that the general standard of the public conscience on the matter in the two countries is absolutely different. Take this in proof. The standard Persian work, the classic with which the education of almost every school-boy commences, and an intimate acquaintance with which is expected from every native gentleman calling himself in any degree educated, is the Gulistan of Sadi. Natives, Mahomedans especially, can never tire themselves in praise of its beauty, the purity of its style, etc. It consists of a great number of short anecdotes arrayed under certain heads, as "Government," "Education," "Love and Youth," and the like. And yet the moral tone of this much lauded book may be judged from the fact that a *large number* of the stories are simply untranslateable into English and are omitted altogether in any English version; and this not on account of any mere coarseness of expression etc., such as one is familiar with even in the case of a Shakespeare, but because the whole point of the story turns on some of the most degrading sins known to man. I have just been reading the original and so speak of what I know. And this is the text-book put, in all indigenous schools, in an absolutely unexpurgated form into the hands of every boy at the age of 10 or 11. Urdu English Dictionaries bear only too painful evidence to the same fact. One has recently been published in Delhi whose pages are stained not here or there, but everywhere, by a grossness such as you could scarcely believe possible: and yet in a certain sense there is no question that the author makes out his case when he pleads in self-extenuation that any dictionary which excluded such would fail absolutely to be a faithful mirror of the life, thoughts, and languages of the people of the land.

One more point, almost too unnatural and painful to English ears to be mentioned. Our own schoolboys tell us that some of the foulest thoughts and language they have learnt has been learnt at their mother's knee; the young mothers often delighting to get their young children and pit them against each other,—contests of obscenity and vile abuse. Startling revelations on this subject come out from time to time from the pen of native gentlemen, who are beginning to realise by the contact with Englishmen at once what home life *may* be and what their home life too often *is*. But I have said enough. I hope not too much.

1. I do not claim, I should be most loth that you should think I do claim, to have given a complete or exhaustive description of Indian life. From other points of view accounts might be written, and written with every bit as much truth, which would present to you the picture of a people with much that is good, much that is attractive, not a little perhaps that would be worthy of our own imitation, in their character and life. Even on the side to which I have confined myself I have no doubt that others, approaching it from a different standpoint, would be able to adduce instances and show facts which would seem to point to a conclusion different from the one I have arrived at, and to which due weight ought doubtless to be given if we wish to attain exact conclusions. But what I do claim is that to Indian life there is, to say the least of it, a very dark side —a side infinitely darker, both in intensity and especially in wide extent, than any parallel that could be adduced from home—and that side I have tried to bring out, believing deeply that on that side at any rate I have in no way exaggerated the evil or drawn the picture in too dark colours.

Secondly, and this is for us out here rather than for you, the presence of such evils should rather nerve than dishearten us in our work, and we should see in them the sure pledges of the victories which await our Faith. How great the strain in this respect is, I doubt whether you can at all adequately realise. To have to live in a country where you can in the full sense of the word trust scarcely any one, or no one at all: where nine-tenths of religious enquirers end their visit with a request for pecuniary help for the instruction in the English language, or for a recommendation to some official post: where nine-tenths of the servants, or considerably more, seem absolutely incapable of giving you a simple straight answer to the most ordinary indifferent question: where even in contact with the higher social classes you have to ask yourself with reference to almost every remark what the real animus and ultimate bearing of it is:— this constitutes a strain on one's own moral tone about the most severe I can conceive, and one to which it is not wonderful if at times not missionaries only among the Englishmen employed in this land in some measure succumb, and allow themselves to follow lines of action which would have been impossible at home. And at times, as the realization of it is borne in with special vividness, one is almost tempted to despair and throw up the whole work in disgust, believing it to be impossible ever to get a hold on a people who seem so to

have lost the very primary conditions of morality. And yet would there not be more reason to despair, at any rate to think that one had no work to do amongst them of importance sufficient to detain one far from home and friends, if it were not so? If from England, with its long centuries of Christian discipline, we came to this land to find a standard of public morality and good faith and a public conscience very much the same in all main respects to that we had left behind, could we possibly avoid the conclusion that there was no need for any special exertions on our part, that their own faith or civilization or what not could impart to them practically all we had ourselves to give, and therefore that the sooner we got home again the better? But when one sees how fearfully the long centuries of training this country has undergone have *failed* to raise it to anything of a higher life, nay have seemed rather to sink it even lower and lower—with public purity, faith and uprightness, surviving only as dreams or as names in ancient literature—then surely we must feel that we have what they have not, and that in duty to our Lord we must communicate to them the spring and principle of all that is lasting and true and pure in our own English life.

And lastly, what by the very nature of the case can so meet their need as the Revelation of the God man? They have lost faith in man as man because they have lost faith in God the creator and original of man, the One in whose image man was created, and whose Holiness, Purity and Truth at once assure us of the reality of these, and constitute the everlasting guarantee that man, corrupted, imperfect, unworthy as he so often is, has yet another possibility open to him, a higher, a truer, a more congenial nature to which he is truly heir—and how is that faith to be received but by their eyes being opened to behold the Word "who was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth?" Through touch with that perfectly human life they can be led, as in no other way, to the perfectly divine life in all its fulness of Grace and Truth. O do pray for us that the Divine life may so flow in our veins and so shine in our lives that we may be permitted to hasten the day of His coming—the day of that coming when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas.

G. A. LEFROY.

CAMBRIDGE: PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A. AND SONS, AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.